

Learning from the NACCOM Community Research Programme



June 2022

www.naccom.org.uk

NACCOM is a registered charity in England and Wales Registration No.1162434

Contents

Introduction2

Background2

Community Research Programme review..... 3

 Approach to review..... 3

 Learning from the review 4

 Recommendations and response 6

 Community Researcher recommendations 6

NACCOM response ?

Reflections on the Programme from the..... 7

 Community Research team

Recommendations for other organisations..... 9

Conclusion10



Introduction

This report tells the story of what we have learnt through being a part of the NACCOM Community Research programme. As Community Researchers and people who have faced the challenges of migration and destitution we want to use our experiences so that others do not face the same hardships that we have. Community Research is a way of understanding the problems our community faces and using

our lived experience to try and make things better. Through being involved in the programme we have learnt much about ourselves and about how we can work together to deliver research work. This document shares some of this learning and we hope it will be of benefit to others who want to run a similar project or do research in their own communities.

- The NACCOM Community Research team

Background

Community Researchers are NACCOM volunteers who participate in, design and lead research work at NACCOM. As a group, the Community Researchers discuss the areas of destitution, homelessness, and migration that they wish to collectively research and NACCOM supports the group to undertake ethical, safe and impactful research. The work of the group provides a space for people with lived experience of immigration control to research, analyse and present solutions to destitution in our communities. This work has grown out of NACCOM's Community Reporter work (see an evaluation of the Community Reporter project) and reflects NACCOM's commitment to sharing knowledge and power.

The project has been coordinated by a facilitator (either NACCOM staff or as a consultant) assisting the group in planning and undertaking research projects. The role has included supporting Community Researchers and

working with the NACCOM team to ensure that there are clear routes for the research findings and that they are presented directly to decision makers. The volunteer Community Research group was established in March 2021 by NACCOM's Research and Policy Coordinator who supported its development. Six people joined the group and at the time of writing all six remain part of the group. In August 2021, the Research and Policy Coordinator moved on to a new role outside of NACCOM and a new facilitator joined the team on a temporary freelance basis to support the Community Research Programme. This coincided with a planned review of the programme, which was scheduled to take place after six months of delivery. This report shares learning from this review, the response to the review from NACCOM as well as details of the ongoing development of the programme.

How the group initially worked:



Met online for two hours once per week at a time agreed that would best suit the group.



Introductory training was delivered as well as ongoing sessions covering topics such as facilitation and ethics.



Compensated for refreshments during the meeting, data costs and childcare costs.



The first fieldwork (and only fieldwork at time of review) was delivered as part of a project with Homeless Link.



Community Researchers supported with strategy development and recruitment of the temporary Community Researcher Facilitator (CRF).

Community Research Programme Review

The following section details the aims, findings, recommendations and response from NACCOM to the Community Research programme review.

Approach To Review

Aims of Community Research Programme review

The review took place in October and November 2021 and engaged key stakeholders to understand experiences of participating in and working with the Community Research Programme. The aims of the review were to:

- ✓ **Identify successes and strengths of the Community Research programme.**
- ✓ **Identify areas for improvement for the Community Research programme.**
- ✓ **Identify opportunities for the programme that can be of benefit to Community Researchers and that can further NACCOM's work.**
- ✓ **Create a coherent and structured plan for the next six months of the programme and beyond.**

Key stakeholders engaged were:

- ✓ Community Researchers.
- ✓ NACCOM Staff.
- ✓ Representatives from partner organisations.

Review methods

The review process used the following data capture methods to achieve the above aims:

Review and feedback workshop

A group session was held in September 2022 to introduce the review process and gather initial feedback on the programme from Community Researchers. The session explored expectations and realities of the programme for Community Researchers, and then chronologically reviewed phases of the programme under headings relating to a 'typical' research project including: Researcher recruitment, training, designing research, fieldwork, analysis, sharing findings, campaigning for change. The session lasted for two hours and 6 CRs attended. Notes were taken using a Miroboard and 2 CRs took additional notes which were shared afterwards with the facilitator.

One-to-one semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were delivered with Community Researchers, staff and external stakeholders. Interviews followed a set of pre-designed questions on agreed topics and lasted around an hour. Written notes were taken from the interview and then shared with the participant to ensure that they were an accurate record of the conversation. In total, 10 interviews were conducted (5 with CRs, 4 with NACCOM staff and 1 with a representative from a partner organisation).

Anonymous online survey

A short, internet-based survey was created and shared with Community Researchers which could be completed anonymously. This was to ensure that CRs had the opportunity to honestly feedback concerns that they may not feel comfortable doing one-to-one. 2 CRs completed the survey.

Initial thematic analysis of findings was conducted to identify patterns in terms of perspectives and experiences of the programme. Initial findings were presented back at a:

Analysis and planning session

This session with Community Researchers provided a 'sense-check' on data gathered and initial analysis and a further narrative on findings. It also looked to generate recommendations for the programme moving forward. The format of the meeting was to first discuss the emerging findings, then a group discussion on recommendations, followed by a task exploring the 'Give and Get' for CRs. 5 Community Researchers attended this session, one of whom led the facilitation of the session while the CRF took notes.

The review and NACCOM response was presented to Community Researchers and staff in December 2021. The review, action plan and a proposal for developing the Community Research Programme were then presented to and approved by NACCOM's board of trustees in January 2022.



Learning from the Review

The review revealed a range of learnings, challenges and strengths of the community research programme to date. These are grouped in the following five areas:

Getting Involved and Expectations

- **Creating change.** The key motivation for CRs to be involved was to create change in the immigration system.
- **Clarity of direction.** At points there has been a lack of clarity among CRs and staff about the function and direction of the programme.
- **Primary research.** CRs & staff expected more primary research to be delivered with corresponding research and communications outputs to be produced.
- **Integration with NACCOM.** Clearer links between the CR programme and with wider NACCOM work and staff is needed. Better internal communications will help to achieve this.

Building a supportive group

- **Supportive group.** A key success of the CR programme has been the development of a well-integrated and mutually supportive group with a strong rapport. Regularity of meetings has created space for these relationships to develop.
- **Safe space.** CRs reported that a 'safe space' has been created which is essential for the work. Shared facilitation and planning of sessions has helped to build this space – and has also had benefits for researchers in gaining new skills.
- **Online meetings.** Meetings online have had benefits in that they are more efficient and allowing contributions from across the country and in some cases have also developed digital skills.
- **Fortnightly meetings.** In future, the majority of CRs requested to continue meeting as a group every fortnight with opportunities for engagement like research fieldwork, training and other NACCOM events in between. At present the group did not need/want to expand its membership however there is a clear desire to reach more people through research activities. In the future there are ideas of having different groups in different cities.

Supporting involvement

- **Unfair balance.** Community Researchers were all asked the question, "Do you think there is a fair balance between what you give and what you get in return?" All but one of the CR responded that they felt that the balance was not completely fair.
- **Inadequate expenses.** The £5 expenses offered for refreshments was seen as not enough to cover the cost of lunch.
- **Equipment limitations.** The equipment provided was seen to be adequate for accessing group meetings, but also bought some limitations. Some additional training may be needed around using digital devices.
- **Preparing for work.** CRs requested more opportunity for personal development including developing employability skills and support to prepare for work. For example, access to more training and getting certificates and qualifications.
- **Personal and psychological support.** Questions were also raised around how CRs are supported psychologically and with situational issues like housing which might arise during engagement with the programme. Particularly what role NACCOM can play when people have 'crisis' in their lives.

Preparing people to research, campaign and beyond

- **Useful training.** The CRs reported that they had generally enjoyed the training with some of the topics highlighted as particularly interesting or useful including: Safeguarding, confidentiality and communications skills.
- **Positive feedback for activities.** There was positive feedback from staff and CRs about the opportunities to engage in activities that sat outside of the CR remit. For example, the destitution framing workshops and in recruitment processes.
- **Communication skills.** CRs identified that personally they had faced challenges around how to engage and communicate and that through participation they had learnt new skills to communicate well.
- **Building confidence.** All CRs felt that they had developed confidence based on being involved. This is the main area it has helped them personally.
- **Further training.** Additional training is needed around policy issues in order to be effective in research and follow-up campaigning.

Delivering research and campaigns for change

- **Limited scale.** Where data collection has taken place (in the case of the project in partnership with Homeless Link), CRs that were involved felt that they were run well. However, the scale has not been very large so far.
- **Limited insight.** It was felt that at present there had been limited insight generated through the project so far.
- **Deliver fieldwork.** Among CRs there is a clear desire to deliver fieldwork, deliver campaign for change work and to influence policy for the benefit of people subject to immigration control.
- **Focus of research.** CRs and staff identified a need to set a focus for the research and clear objectives for the programme and identify a key topic and begin the research process.
- **Creating change.** The CRs reflected that ultimately they want to deliver work that can lead to positive social change. Creating a campaign for change is something participants hope to focus on in future.

Aspirations for the future of the programme

- **Potential for impact.** Across the board CRs, staff and external stakeholders agree that there is vast amounts of potential to deliver some truly impactful work. There are many directions that this might take in terms of programme shape but also issues that the group might address.
- **Complimenting work.** The CR programme has the potential to compliment wider NACCOM work with structured and adhoc activities, which should be integrated into the programme.
- **Defining CR role.** Work is needed to further define the role of CR and think more about how to be involved/integrated in all of NACCOMs work more broadly would also be useful.
- **Mutual benefit.** To be truly sustainable the CR programme needs to have value to NACCOM as an organisation and to have value for CR present and future.
- **Staying involved.** All CRs said they are interested in staying involved, but before they made a decision they wanted to look at the future plans for the project.

Recommendations and response

The following section highlights recommendations for the future of the Community Research Programme developed by Community Researchers during an analysis and planning workshop and then signed off by the team. It also states the response from the NACCOM board and senior management team on the actions being taken moving forward.

Learning/recommendation	Response
CRs identified that they would like 1:1 supervision and personalised plans with their own goals and targets.	The CR programme has been moved to bring it more into line with volunteer management and progression approaches in terms of the roles and how they are supported. This will be a key responsibility of the full-time CR Facilitator role moving forward, including one-to-one supervision and setting personal development goals.
It is clear that there may be times when CR need routes to support when there are personal or psychological issues in their lives, given their current or recent experience of destitution and immigration control. This could include additional financial support	<p>The development of an enhanced safeguarding framework is in progress. As an immediate step the CR Facilitator spoke to CRs about emergency contacts and routes to support in supervision.</p> <p>NACCOM is developing protocols for a hardship fund as part of the safeguarding framework ringfenced for CR volunteers.</p> <p>NACCOM to bring in some support for reflective training and practice for the staff team and volunteers, in acknowledgement of the challenging environment we work in and the potential for re-traumatising or secondary trauma.</p>
CRs sometimes felt their equipment and training needs were not met.	<p>CRs had been reimbursed £5 (towards refreshments) for their attendance at each session, as well as contribution to data costs and childcare where necessary. The existing CR expenses policy allows for £10 to be paid if meetings are held over lunchtime, and as the sessions are held on Fridays from 11am – 1pm these payments have been increased to £10. A review of these contributions will be done as part of the larger project proposal.</p> <p>NACCOM will aim to be proactive in providing expenses in advance when activities or travel are in place to ensure that CRs are never out of pocket.</p>
CRs reflected that there could be further acknowledgement from NACCOM for their contributions and expertise.	<p>CRs have each been sent a certificate acknowledging their contribution to the CR programme and stating what training they've taken part in. These will now be given annually and/or on completion of their volunteering participation.</p> <p>More opportunities for celebration and for CRs to contribute to organisational decision making have been created including involvement in NACCOM's strategy development.</p>
Deliver a research project and a follow-up campaign that will improve the situation of people facing immigration control and be more embedded in NACCOM	<p>NACCOM staff team looked at areas of research that we wanted to explore from the annual members survey in 2021.</p> <p>A workshop was run with CR in Nov 2021 to scrutinise and explore NACCOM annual survey data and the topics identified by the staff and collaboratively set a research topic.</p> <p>A research project to understand the experiences of people who have had an unsuccessful asylum claims and explore how support can be best provided by third sector and community groups towards settling their status has now started. The project will be delivered by the CR with support from the CRF, Policy and Research Coordinator and Communications Co-ordinator and input from the Director, Network Development Team and NACCOM members.</p> <p>The recruitment of a full-time permanent CRF was approved by NACCOM trustees in January 2022 and will help ensure that the work is given the importance it deserves and is embedded in the core of how NACCOM operates.</p>

Reflections on the programme from the Community Researchers

The following statements are written by members of the Community Research team in relation to their experiences and feelings on what makes the CR programme work for them.

The importance of a safe space

For research to be a true reflection of how immigration challenges and shapes lives it needs to involve people who have experienced destitution. The true impact of destitution is incapacitating, financially, physicality and emotionally. A lot of people who have gone through homelessness and immigration feel that you need to protect yourself and not speak out as you worry you will be seen as demanding, ungrateful or seen as someone who can cause trouble. You are wrestling with need for shelter but feeling you do not deserve support. Our group conversation topics are often controversial and challenging: systemic racism; mental illness; the impact of homelessness. That is why it is important to create an environment where people are comfortable to talk. For our research there is still a power dynamic as our experiences are similar yet different. That can mean a dilemma in what you share. As a group we have created a space that is very safe. It is the first time I have found a space where you feel so safe that you ended up expressing yourself.



Geo

A close group is supportive

The group was really very good – We have got connected now. We are very supportive of each other. We take notes for each other. We explain things to each other very freely like we are brother and sister. The best thing is that even though it is online we have had this kind of bonding. It is good to engage with people particularly in the lockdown time as it was good for my mental health – most of the time I am alone in my house – so meeting with people regularly has been really positive.



Sarah

Clarity of roles, responsibilities and support

As a person going through the immigration system you don't know how it works. Support providers like Local Authorities and charities don't explain what is happening or what the process is and that can be disorientating. When you join an organisation as an 'expert-by-experience' it is really important to know what your role involves and what support is on offer. The first and foremost thing is to have introduction to understand the organization, your responsibilities and what kind of support is on offer and how it might help you in the future. This needs to be really clear and you need to keep reminding people on what's available and what's expected of people. It is all about having clarity.



lunA

Working together builds confidence

Because I don't have public speaking skills that has been challenging. I know what I want to say but I find it hard to get the right words and having the confidence to speak. Doing the meeting every week has helped me improve. I am getting used to it. That comes from speaking to more and more people. I didn't even know the word 'Facilitation' before I got involved! We take turns to facilitate the group and work together to plan the work we are doing. One thing I believe is that facilitating improves my confidence so I am really enjoying it.



Kas

The power of shared experience in research

NACCOM gave me hope since I started volunteering in 2018 until now. The training has been really important. We learnt how to conduct interviews on camera and audio and how to answer questions from the media or in public as a lived experience Asylum Seeker. NACCOM has helped a lot of people without accommodation through its members network and harnessing this experience in research can help us to ask the right questions and build the evidence that we need to change immigration policies for the better. The government should start listening to NACCOM service providers and the people they support as these are people who have the experience of how the system works.



Nico

Creating change motivates us

Policy has to change. We talk to people so we have the understandings of what is happening. The part that is really powerful for me is that we can make the change. Generally, I want to change Immigration – as a person who is a minority and a person of colour then it is more of a problem to me. As a group and as NACCOM we need to look at the thing that effects people the most and figure it out. Even if we can make the smaller changes it will help people. We need to look at what is achievable, where we put our energy to and what is with NACCOM's strategy. We need to set where our direction should be so that we can make the system better.



J.A.



Recommendations for other organisations

On Friday 8th April 2022 the Community Research team met for a two hour session with the NACCOM Director to reflect on the development of the CR programme since the review and to highlight any learning that could be shared with organisations looking to develop a CR programme or other coproduction activity. The following recommendations detail these:



Grow a programme

Creating a programme takes time and is best done when it is 'grown' with the input of those involved. Some things can be pre-set, but the flexibility to change, develop and shape activities, training and the programme itself as you go along is key.



People need support

Recognising that people involved in a programme will need ongoing support to be involved. Mental ill health, trauma and instability in people's situations can bring challenges and people may need support to engage and routes to additional support where needed, particularly when there is not a support function within the organisation.



People are the most important resource

The growing of the programme should as far as possible be led by the Community Researchers in partnership with the facilitator. Sharing power, joint decision making and co-facilitation are important steps towards this.



Critical consciousness

People involved in programmes can build a better understanding of systems and the injustice within them. Focusing training on understanding these systems, policy and practice improves the research itself, but can also help people to understand their own situations better and how to navigate and respond to them in a more effective way.



It takes time

Growing a programme takes time and should not be rushed into place. It's important to put the groundwork in place. That said, you need to build in activities throughout so the programme feels it has direction and it feels meaningful for all.



Integrate across the organisation

It is important to have awareness and engagement across different departments and functions of the organisation. Creating awareness and 'buy-in' will ensure that the programme can be impactful and learning can be shared internally and externally.



Commitment from the organisation

Organisations who are starting a programme should ensure there is commitment from the organisation of time and financial resource. Staff members may also move on so it is important that this commitment is across the organisation.



One approach with wider benefits

When establishing a co-production activity, focus on one approach (for NACCOM it was Community Research) and focus on making it the best it can be. By having one programme in place with engaged participants it can bring benefits to other areas of the organisation to supporting consultation and engagement.



Change happens

People can leave. Priorities change. Consistency is needed for people involved in the programme.

Conclusion

The Community Research Programme has been a new endeavour for NACCOM and with it has come successes, challenges and learning. In this report we have tried to openly share this learning so that other organisations can benefit when establishing similar programmes. Across NACCOM, from the board of trustees to the Community Researchers themselves, we can see the potential of the programme and have committed to further developing it to be a central part of NACCOM's new strategy.

We believe that having lived experience of destitution and immigration control driving our work is ethically the right thing to do and, a year on from first establishing the programme, we can also see that it is an impactful way to work. At the time of writing this report the Community Research team are delivering fieldwork as part of a research project that has been led by the team itself – we are excited to see what the result of this will be and how the Community Research Programme will continue to grow.





Photos courtesy of Canva.

0161 706 0185 / office@naccom.org.uk / www.naccom.org.uk

f @naccomnetwork  @NACCOMNetwork

NACCOM, Youth Resource Centre, Oxford Street, Whitley Bay, NE26 1AD.
NACCOM is a registered charity in England and Wales Registration No.1162434